

Award Underscores the Power of Lean, the Benefits of Clusters



Delta Industries of East Granby, a founding member of the Aerospace Components Manufacturers (ACM) cluster, has received the U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Subcontractor of the Year Award for Region I. And Delta President William Evans says he owes it all to the lean manufacturing principles he and his team acquired through membership in ACM.

As with all clusters, ACM's activation was made possible by substantial seed funds from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), combined with investments by the companies themselves.

In nominating Delta for the distinguished award, Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Division of United Technologies Corp. praised the company for its 100 percent on-time delivery, outstanding quality, substantial cost reductions and commitment to both customer service and its own employees. Pratt noted that Delta was able to achieve performance levels unmatched by any other fabrication supplier because it took advantage of the workforce-development courses, lean manufacturing training and consulting services available to member companies of the ACM cluster. These resources made it possible for Delta to learn and adopt the most advanced manufacturing processes.

"This group [ACM] is unique and its efforts have assisted the growth of high paying manufacturing jobs among its members while competing against international sources," Pratt's nomination says. It goes on to say that Delta's 100 percent on-time delivery "is the result of the lean manufacturing concepts it embraces."

Lean manufacturing has been a major focus of ACM from its inception. Members of the cluster have worked with each other and with world-class instructors to incorporate lean principles, thereby increasing productivity, reducing costs and improving turnaround times.

"Before our company began our journey to lean manufacturing through ACM, we had serious overdue problems," says Bill Evans. "Because of ACM and our transformation to a lean operation, we went from a poor delivery record to 100 percent on time!"

Bill Evans and everyone at Delta Industries deserve high praise for the vision, commitment and hard work that earned them this prestigious award. And their achievement demonstrates that business leaders who outlined Connecticut's competitiveness strategy were right on target when they identified lean techniques as essential to the survival and growth of Connecticut manufacturers.

As a regional winner, Delta now becomes eligible for the national Small Business Subcontractor of the Year Award.



Executive Order Extends Council's Term, Citing Bipartisan Support

The Governor's Council on Economic Competitiveness and Technology will go on improving Connecticut's economic competitiveness, thanks to an Executive

Order Governor John G. Rowland issued in December 2001.

Executive Order No. 13A extends the term of the council for another two years, until Dec. 31, 2003. The council is composed of leaders from business, government, labor, education and other key sectors. Originally created in 1998, the council is charged with encouraging the activation of industry clusters by the private sector, advising the governor and legislators on issues related to economic competitiveness, and monitoring cluster development statewide. It is co-chaired by the governor and a business executive—James C. Smith, chairman and chief executive officer of Webster Financial Corp.

The Executive Order lays out several reasons why the council's

reappointment is vital to the state. It notes that industry-cluster-based economic development is "a highly successful means of developing a state and regional economy that is market driven and private industry led," and that the council has been instrumental in launching initiatives to deal with "critical issues" ranging from "bioscience laboratory space, transportation investment and workforce development, to inner-city revitalization, lean manufacturing and communication strategies." In addition, it points out that legislation enacted over the past three years demonstrates that there is "broad bipartisan consensus" in the state on the value and potential of the cluster initiative that the council champions.

The council's reappointment demonstrates that Connecticut leadership is committed to the long-term investment required to unleash the potential of industry-cluster-based economic development.

Task Force to Study Vo-Tech Programs



Connecticut's economic vitality is closely linked with the state's ability to continue to offer businesses one of the best-prepared workforces in the world. Young people's future quality of life depends on being able to move into well-paying jobs. And the state's vocational-technical high schools play an important part in achieving both those goals. That's why the Governor's Council identified these schools as a top priority in the drive to make Connecticut more economically competitive.

Now a new task force will take a fresh look at the vocational-technical school system in Connecticut, to ensure that courses of study offered today are correctly aligned to the industry needs and jobs of tomorrow. The task force was created by Executive Order in January. Carol P. Wallace, president

and CEO of Cooper Instrument Corp., and Nathaniel D. Woodson, chairman and CEO of United Illuminating, co-chair the task force. Its membership is comprised of business executives; legislators; the commissioners of the departments of Education, Economic and Community Development, and Labor; and representatives from the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the State Board of Education.

The task force is charged with developing an action plan for aligning programming, budgeting and planning at vo-tech schools with the short- and long-term needs of Connecticut's economy. It will give particular attention to the needs of companies in emerging, growth and technology sectors. The group will issue an interim report in the second quarter, followed by a final report this summer.

Hot Spot Campaign Targets High-Tech Firms



Connecticut's newest You Belong in Connecticut marketing campaign, formally launched in December at the annual Team Connecticut Rally, is designed to make high-tech companies nationwide think "Connecticut" when they're looking for a great business location.

Nicknamed the "Hot Spot" campaign, the marketing initiative will send the message to information technology and bioscience companies across the country that Connecticut has the key assets necessary to compete with Silicon Valley and Boston's Route 128: a strong existing business base, a highly educated and innovative workforce, venture capital, a business-friendly government and a strategic location between Boston and New York.

Michael Fleisher, chairman and CEO of Stamford-based Gartner Inc., the

nation's leading information technology research firm, joined Governor Rowland in kicking off the campaign. Fleisher noted that Connecticut "has a long and distinguished history of technological innovation" and, by getting the word out more, will continue to attract "companies that rely on people with exceptional brainpower and talent to be successful."

DECD is funding and overseeing the campaign, which is a collaborative effort by DECD, CURE (representing the BioScience Cluster) and the Connecticut Technology Council (representing the IT Cluster). The campaign will use a broad-based strategy, including special events, public relations and advertising. It is an outgrowth of the enormously successful You Belong in Connecticut branding initiative, which was launched in 1999 at the recommendation of the Governor's Council.

Keeping Connecticut the Insurance Capital of the World



The insurance sector is a critical component of Connecticut's economy, and has been for well over a century. That's why it was identified as a high priority by both the Governor's Council and DECD.

Now a number of business leaders, recognizing the enormous economic potential of the multifaceted insurance industry, have come together to form a task force focused on ensuring that it will continue to flourish and grow in the state.

An Insurance and Financial Services Task Force has been formed under the leadership of Oz Griebel and the MetroHartford Regional Economic Alliance. The chairman of the task force is Shaun P. Mathews, executive vice president of ING. The task force will assess the state of Connecticut's insurance industry and its related financial services and develop a strategy to grow the sector in the MetroHartford Region. Its report, to be completed in June, will recommend steps necessary to fostering the growth

of the industry and generating an increased number of high-paying jobs. The task force's efforts are laying the groundwork for activation of an industry cluster that already is a critical part of Connecticut's economic past and future-insurance and financial services.

Industry deregulation and market demands have brought about widespread change in the insurance industry. Connecticut's once unchallenged leadership is facing fierce competition from other regions. Still, the number of people employed in insurance in the Hartford metropolitan area is 6.5 times greater than that of the average U.S. metropolitan area, underscoring the industry's importance to Connecticut and its citizens.

Task force leaders believe the time is right to place increased emphasis on growing this industry, ensuring its future in the state and actively promoting Connecticut nationwide as the prime location for businesses and people involved in insurance and financial services.

Hats Off to Private-Sector Supporters

Leaders in the private sector have shown enormous support for Connecticut's economic-competitiveness strategy since its inception, giving generously of their time and talent to advance industry clusters and other economic-development initiatives. Many thanks to all of them and to the companies that, in 2001, also made substantial financial investments to the cluster initiative.

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